

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

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DOCUMENT 1-120/81

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

tabled by Mr OEHLER, Mr MUNTINGH, Mrs VAYSSADE,
Mr GLINNE, Mr COLLINS, Mr SCHIELER, Mrs WEBER,
Mrs VAN DEN HEUVEL, Mrs FUILLET, Mr KEY,
Mr VERNIMMEN, Mr ALBERS, Mr VAN MINNEN,
Mrs KROUWEL-VLAM, Mrs WIECZOREK-ZEUL, Mr JOSSELIN,
Mr GATTO, Mr ADAM, Mr JAQUET, Mr SCHINZEL, Mrs VIEHOFF
Mr MOREAU, Mr HANSCH, Mr ARFE, Mr CARIGLIA,
Mr GRIFFITHS and Miss QUIN

on behalf of the Socialist Group

with request for urgent debate

pursuant to Rule 14 of the Rules of Procedure

on European cooperation on reducing pollution
of the Rhine

The European Parliament,

- whereas the differences of opinion among the countries bordering the Rhine on reducing pollution of the Rhine by chlorides, far from being resolved, seem to have reached the point where any European solution would appear blocked,
- whereas the level of pollution of the Rhine by chemical substances and chlorides is unacceptable to all those who live along the banks of the Rhine and whereas this situation has unjustly set these people at loggerheads despite the fact that they are all interested in the quality and protection of the environment and in particular of the aquatic environment; whereas the discharge of salt into the Rhine is seen by workers in the Alsatian potassium mines and by the population of Alsace as an unprecedented waste which they deplore while calling on the public authorities to make use of this raw material by exploiting it industrially,
- noting the failure of the international conference held in The Hague on 26 January 1981 at which the Environment Ministers of France, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Luxembourg rejected the establishment of an international salt factory with a capacity of 1 million tonnes,
- having regard to the answer to Written Question No. 358/80 by Mr MUNTINGH in which the Commission of the European Communities admitted that the establishment of a salt factory with a capacity of 1 million tonnes in Alsace would make for a reduction of 20 kg/sec. of chlorine ions, the first objective of the Convention concluded in Bonn in 1976,
- noting that there is therefore a discrepancy between this objective as fixed and the political will of the Member States concerned to achieve this objective,
- recalling that production of salt in Europe is estimated at some 24 million tonnes and that the disposal on the European market of 1 million tonnes of residual salt can hardly be regarded as creating a surplus on a market which is in any case expanding,
- considering that the failure of the negotiations in this field can hardly be regarded as fortuitous since:

A. as far as France alone is concerned:

- there has been a ban on using salt produced by the Alsatian Potassium Mines for domestic consumption since 1952 despite the opinions to the contrary of the National Academy of Medicine and the Food Hygiene Section of the High Council of Public Health, which have stated that salt extracted from the potassium mines in Alsace is perfectly suitable for domestic consumption;

- projects for building up new chemical processing industries or a salt factory remain blocked;

B. as far as France and Europe are concerned:

- noted authorities (in France, for instance, the Mergers and Monopolies Commission) have denounced an organization of the salt market - described by this body as a cartel - which infringes competition rules, as the market for salt is in any case dominated by a small number of firms which, it alleges, have divided up the market and distorted the rules governing price formation;
 - the Commission of the European Communities itself has pointed out that the information it has received 'appears precise and consistent enough to warrant investigation at the firms concerned',
1. Calls upon the Council of Ministers to explain why the Environmental Ministers meeting in The Hague rejected the plan for an international salt factory in Alsace;
 2. Requests the Commission of the European Communities to inform the European Parliament of the conclusions of its enquiries so that the latter may have all the information necessary to identify the most appropriate measures for disposing of the waste currently discharged into the Rhine;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

JUSTIFICATION FOR URGENT PROCEDURE

Given the serious level of pollution of the Rhine and the concerns and fears of those who live on the banks of the river, there is an urgent need to know why the Environment Ministers meeting in The Hague rejected the plan for an international salt factory in Alsace and to have information about the situation of the market for salt in Europe.